

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT OLD SALEM MUSEUMS AND GARDENS

by

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Old Salem Museums and Gardens is an open air museum in Winston-Salem, North Carolina that presents the history of the city's original settlement. The museum contains one of the first official historic districts in the state, and is one of North Carolina's first museums of its kind. Salem, North Carolina was a theocratic society that the Moravian Church founded and operated. One of Salem's main features was its egalitarian nature. This thesis will examine the ways that Old Salem Museums and Gardens displays the history of Salem's women, both positively and negatively. I will also attempt to offer ideas that will help to improve the museum's representation of Moravian women throughout the institution.

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT OLD SALEM MUSEUMS AND GARDENS

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Master of Arts in History

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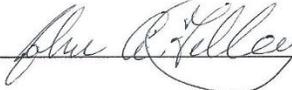
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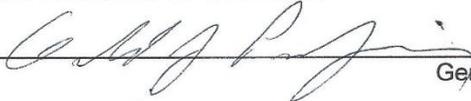
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Introduction

This study analyzes the ways in which the Old Salem Museums and Gardens historic site presents the history of Moravian women in the town of Salem, North Carolina. Its goals are to determine, first, the extent to which the organization portrays the history of Old Salem as patriarchal, which is characteristic of other colonial American societies but not representative of Moravian culture; and second, the reasons why it does so. In order to achieve these goals, it will examine the various ways that women are portrayed at the site, which includes Old Salem and Salem Academy and College. It will also explore the ways in which the site effectively presents the history of Moravian women, and the ways in which it could more accurately portray the integral role they played in the settlement, development, economy, religious life, and education of the town of Salem.

Salem, North Carolina, founded in 1766 by the Moravian Church, was one of the first European settlements in the Piedmont region. The Moravians, a long-persecuted religious sect that originated in what is now the Czech Republic, came to America in 1735 seeking religious freedom. Women played an integral part in the founding and development of Salem. The town's society was divided into compulsory groups, or choirs, based on sex, age, and marital status. This arrangement afforded women a social and economic autonomy that was advanced for the eighteenth century. In keeping with their progressive ideas about women, the Moravians founded a school for girls in 1772 that would eventually become Salem Academy and College.

By the mid-twentieth century, Salem had become an outdated part of Winston-Salem, and clubs and organizations in the town began efforts to save the old buildings. There was interest in restoring buildings that were in danger of being lost, as had been

done in Williamsburg, Virginia, but the plans fell through during World War Two. After the war, the city gradually refined its zoning ordinances to protect the site from encroaching businesses. The Citizens Committee for the Preservation of Historic Salem was set up in 1947 with the purpose of drafting a historic zoning ordinance to be included in the city's new regulations. Old Salem, Incorporated, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1950 with the purpose of preserving and restoring the town, and was modeled after Colonial Williamsburg; the name was changed to Old Salem Museums and Gardens in 2006.

The experience of Moravian women is included in the guided tours of Salem, and guides superficially explain women's roles, but usually within the context of their relationship to the men of the town. The tours emphasize the leadership of the men of the settlement, or the church leaders, who are also portrayed as dominantly patriarchal. Salem College has a museum that focuses on the history of Moravian women, as well as that of the school, but Old Salem Museums and Gardens does not have a site that is dedicated solely to the presentation of the female experience, in contrast to the Single Brothers' House, which presents the life of Salem's unmarried men.

Old Salem Museums and Gardens and other local preservation societies have produced a significant body of literature that serves as a primary source for the history of the museum. Many other secondary sources have been produced by various groups and historians associated with the Moravian Church, as well as other historical sites that provide background information. It was also informative to talk to the guides who present the history of the women of Salem, as well as that of Salem Academy and

College, which is responsible for the development and upkeep of the Single Sisters' Museum.

Chapter 1: Sources Regarding the Moravian Church

Because Salem was one of the first major colonial settlements in the interior of North Carolina, the town, its Moravian residents, and the museum that grew out of it have long been the subjects of study in a variety of fields. Throughout the town's history, women played a pivotal role in its settlement and development. Old Salem's historiography is extensive, and can be broken down into five categories: resources produced by members of the Moravian Church, other primary resources, academic resources, promotional and presentational material, and websites. One of the main difficulties in the historiography is the strong tie between the church and Old Salem Museums and Gardens, the institution that runs the museum in the twenty-first century. Given that so many of the scholars who have studied Salem belong to either the town or the church, it is important to take into account the possibility of bias.

Materials produced by members of the Moravian Church comprise a significant portion of the work done on the Moravians and the town of Salem. These studies were written by scholars in diverse fields who are connected to the Moravian Church. They explore various aspects that make up Moravian culture, and help to display its relationship with the community that they created in North Carolina. This intimate connection between authors and the Moravian Church's past and beliefs can be a benefit, as many times it caused authors to take particular care with their research. These writers used resources that were more readily available to researchers who were

part of the Moravian community, such as the oral histories that Elizabeth Lehman Myers used in *A Century of Moravian Sisters: A Record of Christian Community Life*.¹

Because they were written by involved members of the Moravian community, however, the works in this category should be examined critically for bias. Taken as a whole, these titles are useful because they contain the greatest amount of detail regarding Salem. They are also beneficial for the insight that can be acquired by looking at the subject from an entirely Moravian perspective. This benefit can be seen in the way these authors establish a strong connection between social and religious values. To an outsider, the Moravian's choir system and universal education policies could be interpreted as measures of control imposed by theocratic elders; but to a Moravian, these policies are inextricably linked to the ability to worship freely. Thus these works are most useful as an introduction to Moravian culture, both past and present. They illustrate the beliefs of the early Moravian Church, as well as the ways in which the modern Moravian Church remembers its past. Significant titles are *The History of the Church known as the Unitas Fratrum, Or, the Unity of the Brethren, Founded by the Followers of John Hus, the Bohemian, Reformer and Martyr* by Edmund De Schweinitz;² *The Moravians in North Carolina: An Authentic History* by the Reverend Levin T. Reichel; and *Moravians in Europe and America, 1415-1865: Hidden Seed and Harvest* by Chester S. Davis.³

¹ Elizabeth L. Myers, *A Century of Moravian Sisters: A Record of Christian Community Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1918).

² Edmund de Schweinitz was a nineteenth-century bishop of the Moravian Church.

³ Myers, *Century of Moravian Sisters*; Edmund de Schweinitz, *The History of the Church known as the Unitas Fratrum, Or, the Unity of the Brethren, Founded by the Followers of John Hus, the Bohemian, Reformer and Martyr* (Bethlehem, PA: Moravian Publication Concern, 1901); Levin T. Reichel, *The Moravians in North Carolina: An Authentic History* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1968); Chester S. Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America, 1415-1865: Hidden Seed and Harvest* (Winston-Salem, NC: Wachovia Historical Society, 2000).

Historical Sketch of Salem Female Academy by Adelaide L. Fries; *My Name Shall Be There: The Founding of Salem (with Friedberg, Friedland)* by Daniel C. Crews; *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation* by Francis Griffin; *Salem College: 175th Anniversary, 1772-1947* by Salem College; *Old Salem, North Carolina* edited by Mary B. Owen; and *The Road to Salem* by Adelaide L. Fries⁴ represent works that were produced by authors without a close association to the Moravian Church. Without the pressure of church involvement, the authors in this category did not go into as much detail as the previous authors. Instead, they each focused on specific aspects of Salem's history, such as Salem Academy and College, preservation of the town, or a specific Moravian community in the area. Because these sources discuss more specialized subjects, they also tend to pay more attention to separate groups and topics, most significantly women and education. These sources help to illustrate the female experience in Salem from the town's inception through its development to the present; they showcase the pivotal role that women played in shaping the community. They discuss not only the history that is relevant to the Moravian settlement in North Carolina, but also the traditions that made the community unique and the buildings that were important to the town. These authors used an assortment of sources, including Moravian archives, first-hand experience, maps, pictures, and other primary resources. In contrast to the scholars of the previous group, who tended to end their studies in the mid-nineteenth century when the theocracy became a less prominent aspect of the

⁴ Adelaide L. Fries, *Historical Sketch of Salem Female Academy* (Salem, NC: Crist and Keehn, Printers, 1902); Daniel C. Crews, *My Name Shall Be There: The Founding of Salem (with Friedberg, Friedland)* (Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Archives, 1995); Francis Griffin, *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, Incorporated, 1970); Salem College, *Salem College: 175th Anniversary, 1772-1947* (Winston-Salem, NC: 1947); Mary B. Owen, ed., *Old Salem, North Carolina* (Winston-Salem, NC: Garden Club of North Carolina, 1946); Adelaide L. Fries, *The Road to Salem* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

town, the time frame these works cover reaches further, going into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They also focus more on Salem as it developed into its current incarnation as a museum, and less on Moravian ideologies.

Although distance from the Moravian Church works, overall, as an advantage for these authors, it can also be seen as an impediment, as some of them had less formal education. Many gained their information from working directly with Salem as it transitioned from an isolated town to a functioning living history museum. These titles provide materials that were more accessible to the public, but often this ease of comprehension came at the cost of scholarly standards. Some of the authors also had a connection to Moravian culture and ideas gained through work with Old Salem Museums and Gardens or from living in Winston-Salem. Therefore, although they may have not had religious biases, they were heavily invested in the museum and schools in Salem, and worked to portray a positive image, leaving out unfavorable characteristics. These sources demonstrate the role that women played in the development of Salem, and North Carolina as a whole, and the ways that they contributed to keeping the memory of Salem's past alive. They also demonstrate the unique place Salem holds in the history of preservation movements for the entire country.

Because of the exceptionality of the Moravian Church and the communities that it created, the Moravians and the town of Salem have long been a subject of study in a variety of academic fields, most significantly history and sociology. Unlike the sources produced by scholars connected with the church, the authors of these titles focus on an idea or an aspect of Moravian society rather than an inclusive overview. Often, these scholars seem to be searching for the guiding force behind Moravian society, a specific

feature that drove its development and made it unique. The most common institutions chosen for study are the choir system, isolationism, and their communal economy. Some of these authors viewed Moravian society as a series of chain reactions, but in the end they always chose one feature as a main catalyst. Although the subject is similar, there is variety in the way that the authors interpreted the Moravians. Key points on which the interpretations differ are whether the institutions created the town or were tools used by the town, how successful the institutions were in creating a separate society, and how strictly the rules were followed. Each scholar seemed to agree, however, that no matter which institution they considered the most important, Salem always had to struggle with pressure from outside forces. The academic articles in this group are most useful in that they provide insight into the way that the Moravian communities interacted with and fit into the larger framework of early American society.

These authors include historians, sociologists, and political scientists. The articles have less potential for bias, as the writers are completely removed from both the Moravian Church and involvement with Old Salem Museums and Gardens. The varied backgrounds of the authors also helps to add dimension to the study of the ways that women in Salem were treated and their contributions to the development and success of the town. Many of the authors, however, do not give enough credit to the group's religious values and choose to instead interpret the Moravians as an economic or political unit. This failure to acknowledge adequately the theocratic structure of Moravian society weakens the arguments somewhat, but these articles can be useful when paired with other studies that delve more deeply into the religious aspect. Examples of such scholarly articles include *Family Surrogates in Colonial America: The*

Moravian Experiment by Gillian L. Gollin; *The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* by Daniel B. Thorp; “Women on the Trail in Colonial America: A Travel Journal of German Moravians Migrating from Pennsylvania to North Carolina in 1766” by Aaron S. Fogleman; “A Different Kind of Freedom? Order and Discipline Among the Moravian Brethren in Germany and Salem, North Carolina 1771-1801” by Elizabeth Sommer; and “Inclusion and Exclusion in the Moravian Settlement in North Carolina, 1770-1790,” by Brian W. Thomas.⁵

Since the beginning of the efforts to preserve the town of Salem, various groups in the Winston-Salem area including the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA), Salem Academy and College, and the Wachovia Historical Society have produced a significant amount of literature, including titles such as *Winston-Salem: A Cooperative Spirit* by Janet Fox; *A Walk Through Old Salem* by Walter Stone; “A Laudable Example for Others”: *The Moravians and Their Town of Salem* by Gene Capps; *Restoring Old Salem in North Carolina: The Preservation of a Unique Heritage* written and published by Old Salem Incorporated; and *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook*, written by Penelope Niven and Cornelia Wright.⁶ These sources are

⁵ Gillian L. Gollin, “Family Surrogates in Colonial America: The Moravian Experiment,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 31, no. 4 (Nov., 1969): 650-58, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/349305>; Daniel B. Thorp, *The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Aaron S. Fogleman, “Women on the Trail in Colonial America: A Travel Journal of German Moravians Migrating from Pennsylvania to North Carolina in 1766,” *Pennsylvania History* 61, no. 2 (April 1994): 206-34, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27773721>; Elisabeth Sommer, “A Different Kind of Freedom? Order and Discipline Among the Moravian Brethren in Germany and Salem, North Carolina 1771-1801,” *Church History* 63, no. 2 (Jun., 1994): 221-34, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3168589>; Brian W. Thomas, “Inclusion and Exclusion in the Moravian Settlement in North Carolina, 1770-1790,” *Historical Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1994): 15-29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616315>.

⁶ Janet Fox, *Winston-Salem: A Cooperative Spirit* (Montgomery, AL: Community Communications, 1994); Walter Stone, *A Walk Through Old Salem* (Winston-Salem, NC: John E. Blair, 2000); Gene Capps, “A Laudable Example for Others”: *The Moravians and Their Town of Salem* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem Museum and Gardens, 2007); Old Salem Incorporated, *Restoring Old Salem in North Carolina:*

examples of the ongoing efforts by the aforementioned groups to attract attention to the former Moravian community, and were produced in cooperation with Old Salem Museums and Gardens. They chronicle the development of Old Salem Museums and Gardens from its inception to its present situation and showcase the ways Old Salem and the city of Winston-Salem work together to present the area's history. Although these works acknowledge the history of the Moravians and Salem, they focus largely on the town's current form as a museum and historic district. These materials come in a variety of forms, including guidebooks that combine pictures, text, and maps; largely pictorial guidebooks; and sources that are completely text. They are important because they exhibit the way the modern incarnation of Old Salem Museums and Gardens conceptualizes Salem's past. Equally important is that, as with the museum itself, these studies only mention the female experience in passing, not as an integral part of the town's development. These titles are best used as resources for information on the different institutions that can now be found in Salem, including Old Salem Museums and Gardens and Salem College. This close connection to Old Salem Museums and Gardens could also be a drawback, though, because the entire goal of these sources' production was to accentuate the positive aspects of the museum. Therefore, these materials are also best used in conjunction with other types of studies.

There are numerous websites that help to chronicle and promote the history and preservation of Salem, the development of the historic district and museum, and the services offered by its institutions: Old Salem Museums and Gardens, the Single Sisters' House Museum, Salem Academy and College, and MESDA. The historical

The Preservation of a Unique Heritage (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem Incorporated); Penelope Niven and Cornelia B. Wright, *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, Inc.).

information on these sites is closely connected to the promotional studies and materials produced in conjunction with the various institutions. What makes the websites unique and relevant among the materials produced regarding Salem and the Moravians is that they feature the most current information on the town. They are also the resources that are most accessible to the public, serving as a gateway for both visitors and researchers. Not only do the websites feature information on the buildings, tours, programs, and events, but they also offer information designed to aid in research, including libraries, research centers, and databases. Unlike the sources previously described, the websites are much more interactive, and serve as a way for the community to become directly involved with the ongoing efforts to preserve Salem and expand the museum. Examples of websites include those of Old Salem Museums and Gardens, Salem College, Wachovia Historical Society, and the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.⁷

The historiography of Old Salem is extensive, even though for much of the twentieth century, the subjects remained quite limited. With the inception of Old Salem, it has come to be more varied. The sources, however, remain incomplete on the subject of women in Old Salem, reflecting the current policies of Old Salem Museums and Gardens.

⁷ "Old Salem," Old Salem Museums and Gardens, <http://www.oldsalem.org/>; "Salem College," Salem College, <http://www.salem.edu>; "Welcome to the Wachovia Historical Society," Wachovia Historical Society, <http://www.wachoviahistoricalsociety.org/>; Museum of the Early Southern Decorative Arts, "MESDA-Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, <http://mesda.org>.

Chapter 2: The Development and Core Beliefs of the Moravian Church

To understand the town of Salem, North Carolina, it is important to also understand the people who founded it. While the Moravian Church does hold a place in the early history of the Protestant Reformation, the members of this group represented much more than a typical religious denomination. The Moravians, also known as the *Unitas Fratrum* and the Brethren, represented a larger social movement. The members actively set themselves apart from the mainstream societies that surrounded them, and instead created a distinct religious, economic, and social identity dependent upon their isolation. The practices that developed from this basic tenet shaped the people, and subsequently, the character of the town of Salem, giving them both a unique place among the inhabitants of North Carolina and colonial America.

The Moravian Church, or *Unitas Fratrum*, traditionally traces its history to the early evangelical work of John Hus (1369-1415), a Roman Catholic priest from Bohemia, in the modern-day Czech Republic. Hus was active during the time of the Western Papal Schism (1378-1415), a period in which multiple men claimed the papal office. This was a very tumultuous time, with many influential people questioning ancient institutions, while many others clung to them tightly. Hus was a part of a growing movement of priests and educators who, inspired by innovators such as Matthias of Janow and John Wycliffe, were questioning the long-held standards of the Roman Catholic Church.¹ Hus believed that lay people should be given access to a relationship with God, and found the corruption that had become prevalent amongst the Roman Catholic clergy to be

¹ Edmund de Schweinitz, *The History of the Church known as the Unitas Fratrum, Or, the Unity of the Brethren, Founded by the Followers of John Hus, the Bohemian, Reformer and Martyr* (Bethlehem, PA: The Moravian Publication Concern, 1901), 31-32.

disturbing. His main goals as a clergyman, therefore, were to place an emphasis on vernacular teaching and to help bring about clerical reform. He did not see his teachings as innovative or as bringing about a new doctrine, but instead saw himself as an instrument that could be used to bring the church back to its rightful place. Hus spoke out strongly against practices that were becoming common among priests such as drunkenness, sexual immorality, and simony.²

His reformist ideas proved to be influential among both the laity and his peers who were feeling similar tendencies, but his bold sermons also drew strong criticism from more traditional religious figures. Hus ran into trouble with his superiors in the church when he refused to denounce completely the ideas of John Wycliffe, whose teachings were the center of many anti-reformist controversies. In 1410, Archbishop Zbynek of Prague ordered the surrender and burning of all Wycliffe related material and forbade preaching outside of cathedral, monastic, and parochial churches. This ban included Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, where Hus preached. He claimed, however, that his orders came from God and not man, and continued his work. He was immediately excommunicated.³

The defining moment in Hus' fight with the Roman Catholic Church came when Antipope John XXIII⁴ authorized the sale of indulgences to raise money in his fight to be pope. This decision provoked widespread opposition, and Hus emerged as one of the

² Matthew Spinka, *John Hus and the Czech Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), 5-8; Simony is the practice of buying or selling ecclesiastical offices.

³ Matthew Spinka, *John Hus: A Biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968), 86-116.

⁴ An antipope is a person who was elected pope in opposition to the person most commonly considered to hold the papal office. This term generally refers to men claiming to be pope during the time of the Western Papal Schism. Antipope John XXIII is styled as such to help distinguish him from the unattested twentieth-century Pope John XXIII. ("Antipope, n." OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. [http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/8793?redirectedFrom=antipope.](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/8793?redirectedFrom=antipope))

main critics. As a result, for the first time, he lost the support of his king, Wenceslaus IV of Bohemia. When he went even further and denounced the very concept of the papal office, he lost most of his academic supporters as well. In 1412, Cardinal Stephaneschi declared that if Hus did not appear before the curia, any city harboring him would be punished. To protect Prague, he went into exile, although he continued his controversial writing.⁵

Hus' opponents became determined to stop him, and in 1414 he accepted an invitation from the Council of Constance in the hope that his troubled relationship with the church could be resolved. Although he was guaranteed safe passage by Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor, he was arrested soon after his arrival at the council and put on trial for heresy. The first set of charges revolved around his alleged agreement with Wycliffe's writings. Although he did not agree with all of Wycliffe's doctrine, he was condemned for the few tenets that he did accept. The next set of charges consisted of forty-five accusations, some of which were taken out of context from his own writings, and some of which were taken from the testimony of witnesses, which may have been fraudulent. Hus argued that he should be tried based solely on the books of the Bible and his preaching, but was refused. Although he answered the charges by either denying or attempting to explain them, the council was not interested. For the council trying him, most of the charges had been discussed before Hus even arrived in Constance; the trial was a formality. Hus had been intellectually condemned before his arrival.

When Hus refused to recant, he was sentenced to be burned on the grounds of heresy and was executed in Constance on July 6, 1415. The questioning of the papacy

⁵ Spinka, *John Hus: A Biography*, 165-191.

and the structure of the Roman Catholic Church that made up such a large part of John Hus' career spoke directly to the fears that were so prevalent during the Western Papal Schism. At this time, as the Protestant Reformation began to form, Hus was an example of what the Catholic Church had every reason to fear. His execution was the impetus for the organization and rebellion of his supporters.⁶

Soon after his execution, churches began to appear across Bohemia that were dedicated to continuing Hus' mission of church reform. The Roman Catholic Church was as vehemently against the Husites, as his followers were called, as they were against Hus, and it sought to stop them as well. In 1419, bending to pressure, King Wenceslaus IV ordered that all Husite churches be shut down, setting off the Husite Wars. Although the Husites were initially successful, infighting ultimately led to their downfall. Two rival extreme factions dominated the reformist party: the Taborites, a militant group who wanted a complete break from the Catholic Church in order to set up churches that were based on a strict apostolic example; and the Utraquists, who had only minor issues with the Catholic Church, and mainly wanted sacramental reform. The Husite Wars were officially concluded in 1433 when the Utraquists gained control and capitulated to the Catholic Church.⁷

In 1457 a small group of Husites founded a society that they named the "Unitas Fratrum." The group, which came to be known colloquially as "the Brethren," believed that they should completely separate from the Catholic Church, much like the Taborites. This group, however, was far less militant than the larger group had been. Taking cues from their separatist Taborite forbearers, the Brethren lived in small units presided over

⁶ Spinka, *John Hus and the Czech Reform*, 53-78.

⁷ Spinka, *John Hus: A Biography*, 299-321.

by elders, practiced economic communism, and kept their religious beliefs close to the Bible, rejecting the bureaucratic system and extraneous traditions of the Catholic Church. They hoped to coexist peacefully with the Roman Catholic Church, but their noncompliance with the traditional church structure of those around them was met with too much resistance.⁸

As a consequence, in 1467, the Brethren established their own church and selected their own bishops. As a result of this bold decision, the Roman Catholic Church declared the Brethren outlaws and chased them from their villages into the mountains. This new denomination faced periodical opposition, but held firm until the 1620s, when the Holy Roman Empire made a concerted effort to eradicate Protestantism. The government declared that Protestants would have to join the Catholic Church or leave the country. In order to stay true to their faith, a large proportion of the Brethren fled to more tolerant regions such as Moravia, Silesia, and Poland. Although the *Unitas Fratrum* for a time ceased to be an institution on its own, it remained an idea among the former members of the church and their families.⁹

In 1722, families interested in reconnecting with their roots in the *Unitas Fratrum* gradually left Moravia and moved onto the modern-day German estate of Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a Saxon nobleman and scholar interested in the developing Protestant movements. They founded a society that they called Herrnhut. From the start, Herrnhut was a place of refuge for people of many religious and ethnic backgrounds. As a result of this diversity, there was some discussion regarding which religious direction the village should take. In 1727, they settled on a set of bylaws

⁸ Chester S. Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America, 1415-1865: Hidden Seed and Harvest* (Winston-Salem, NC: Wachovia Historical Society, 2000), 1-4.

⁹ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 6-8.

modeled on the principles of the Brethren. The new community based its governmental structure and strictures upon a basic set of principles derived from the example of the early churches found in the New Testament. Each member strove to analyze continually his or her life and purge outside influences that could affect his or her relationship with God. It is important to note that the German Unitas Fratrum was a new movement, and should therefore be viewed as a separate entity. The renewed Unitas Fratrum took inspiration from the original movement, but each incarnation had its own distinct set of leaders and traditions.¹⁰

The renewed Unitas Fratrum developed the village of Herrnhut into the pattern for subsequent Moravian settlements, such as Herrnhag; Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; and Salem, North Carolina. First, they screened all newcomers for worthiness, attempting to ascertain which ones were likely to make trouble within the village or be weak in faith. Once newcomers were accepted into Herrnhut, they were given the choice of following the existing rules or leaving. A group of elders served as the governmental structure of the village. As a safeguard against corruption, they refused to take part in the politics of the region in which they lived, take oaths, or bear arms. The day-to-day affairs were run on a communal basis, according to each person's ability to contribute. There was an emphasis on Christian living rather than Christian doctrine within the village, and each person attempted to model his or her life on those of the Apostles.¹¹

The Moravian Church began to take shape with the creation of its own ministry and the construction of a seminary in the community of Herrnhag, where members of the church began to train ministers. Soon, the ministers began to travel throughout Europe,

¹⁰ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 11-16.

¹¹ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 16-19.

and eventually the world, spreading their message. Like many other groups at the time, the Brethren decided that America provided a viable opportunity; they considered the possibility of setting up a base for their ministry in the New World. In May 1733, the British House of Commons set aside £10,000 for the trustees of the colony of Georgia “to be applied towards defraying the charges of carrying over and settling foreign and other Protestants.”¹² Many German Protestants took advantage of this initiative, and later that year Zinzendorf sent an anonymous letter to Georgia’s trustees requesting a grant to participate. The trustees responded that they could not spare the money, but that the Brethren could have a tract of land if they were to take responsibility for the expense. The Moravians purchased a 500 acre tract in 1734. Two separate parties were sent in 1735 and 1736.¹³

Bishop August Gottlieb Spangenberg, a dynamic leader who would prove to be instrumental in the development of the Moravian Church in America, led the first party who settled on the new land. The settlers’ main focus was to act as missionaries to the Native Americans in the area. They paid off their debts from the purchase of the land and the voyage to America by 1740. They also gained a reputation for their strong work in the communities. It was also at this time, however, that war broke out between Britain and Spain. Since their location in Georgia put them directly in the path of the fighting, the pacifist Moravians decided to remove themselves from the situation, abandoning their settlements and missions in the region.¹⁴

¹² Adelaide L. Fries, *Moravians in Georgia, 1735-1740* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton, Printers and Binders, 1905), 19.

¹³ Fries, *Moravians in Georgia*, 19-39.

¹⁴ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 23-26.

After they decided to form another settlement in 1740, they bought two tracts of land in Pennsylvania, an area Moravian Church leaders had been considering since they began to investigate settlement possibilities in North America in 1734. They quickly founded several towns in 1740 and 1741, with Lititz, Nazareth, and Bethlehem emerging as the main settlements. Each town was built on the established European model of the German towns of Herrnhut and Herrnhag, setting themselves apart from other American groups around them through traditional Moravian isolationism.¹⁵ Once firmly established, Bethlehem became the epicenter of the Moravian Church in America.

Not only did Bethlehem grow to become the largest Moravian settlement in North America,¹⁶ but it also became the headquarters for the Moravian Church and the center for the dissemination of settlers when they decided to form a southern colony. When Wachovia was founded ten years later, the Pennsylvania Moravians exerted considerable influence. In addition to the continual supply of settlers, they provided guidance, both spiritual and practical. In fact, the towns established in North Carolina had much more in common with their northern counterparts than they had with their original German forbearers. By the time that Wachovia was established in 1752, the Moravians had developed a better idea of what type of isolationist community would work best within an American setting.

In 1750, Lord Granville approached the Moravians with an offer to sell them their choice of 100,000 acres of his land.¹⁷ The elders of the Moravian Church in

¹⁵ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 26-27.

¹⁶ Gillian L. Gollin, "Family Surrogates in Colonial America: The Moravian Experiment," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 31, no. 4 (Nov., 1969): 650-58, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/349305>, 652.

¹⁷ John Carteret, 2nd Earl of Granville, (1690-1763) was one of the eight Lord Proprietors of North Carolina. When North Carolina became a royal colony in 1729, he successfully petitioned to maintain control of his share of the land in exchange for giving up all governmental control. (E. Merton Coulter, "The Granville District," *The James Sprunt Historical Publications: Published Under the Direction of The*

Pennsylvania had been interested in spreading their mission to the southern colonies for a while, and in 1752 they sent out a party led by Bishop Spangenberg to select a tract of land. Their objective was to choose an area that would provide plenty of farmland and easy access to fresh water. The party started at the coast, where the bulk of the colony's population was centered, but upon seeing turmoil in the land market in the eastern half of North Carolina, they focused on the backcountry. After an extensive search, they selected a nearly 100,000-acre tract of land in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, in present-day Forsyth County.¹⁸

The Moravians purchased the land for the new settlement, named Wachovia, from Lord Granville in 1753. The first of many parties of settlers left from Pennsylvania shortly thereafter, and arrived in Wachovia in November of that year. This all-male group included a minister, doctor, superintendent, farmers, and mechanics. The earliest stages of the settlement's development were quite difficult given that there were so few people in the area; the Moravian brethren were forced to be largely self-sufficient, but were able to found the town of Bethabara by September of the following year. In the beginning, the brothers ran the settlement from an abandoned cabin that they had found on the land. For the next two years, the single brothers occupied themselves primarily with the cultivation of the community's farmland and the establishment of a trading network with cities in the east.¹⁹

It was also at this time that the Brethren began their relationship with the secular community in the area. Because of the Moravians' commitment to serving others, they

North Carolina Historical Society, ed. J.G. De Roulhac Hamilton and Henry McGilbert Wagstaff, 13, no. 1 (Durham, NC: The Seeman Printery, 1913), 36-37.)

¹⁸ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 28-35.

¹⁹ Levin T. Reichel, *The Moravians in North Carolina: An Authentic History* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1968), 28-38.

drew the attention of the settlers around them, primarily for the services that could be provided by the professionals who were part of their party, including their doctor. The brothers were careful to set up the relationship that would be characteristic of Wachovia's place within the Piedmont of North Carolina. They designated special areas in town for outsiders, allowing interaction, yet carefully keeping them separate.²⁰ Sometimes this relationship could become strained, owing to factors such as the special status given to the Moravian Church by the British Parliament, which included provisions such as exclusion from military service.²¹ The Brethren set themselves apart with their industriousness, and by 1755 the new town of Bethabara included distinctive Moravian buildings, such as the *Gemeinhaus*, or combined Meeting House and parsonage, and the Single Brothers' House, as well as the buildings necessary to their developing trades, such as the mill and the tannery.²² By 1756, Bethabara had a population of sixty-five people, including those who had been born in the area.²³

During this time, the Moravians were working to establish their mission to the Native Americans of the area, but as a European immigrant group, they were not completely trusted. When they decided to settle in the western Piedmont, the area had a significantly smaller population than the coastal region, but troubles with Native Americans in the north drove many colonists to the North Carolina backcountry. This new wave of immigrants in turn caused trouble with the secular colonists and the Native Americans of the South.²⁴ In 1756, the conflict between Native Americans and other European groups in the area set off by the French and Indian War drove the Moravians

²⁰ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 37.

²¹ Reichel, *Moravians in North Carolina*, 39.

²² Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 38.

²³ Reichel, *Moravians in North Carolina*, 40-41.

²⁴ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 44.

at Bethabara to fortify their town. They built a series of palisades around the town that came to be known as Dutch Fort. During this period, Dutch Fort became an integral part of the area for the secular community, who sought refuge and relief from famine in the palisade that the Moravians had created. Ever mindful of their purpose in North Carolina, the Brethren used this opportunity to minister to the people who were being offered assistance.

Many new converts, while willing to accept the Moravian faith, were not willing to adapt to the Moravian style of a communal household. As a result, the elders decided to form another settlement nearby for those who wanted to move away from the traditional communal family economy and way of life that had been used in both Pennsylvania and Bethabara. Bishop Spangenberg came to assist with the endeavor, and in 1759 the elders selected about 2,000 acres of land northwest of Bethabara and began to build a new town they called Bethania. The elders sent eight couples from Bethabara to establish the town, and supported them for a year until they could get their buildings constructed and their farms started. Like the people of Bethabara, the settlers at Bethania helped their surrounding community while they were at war with the Native Americans. In 1762, a year after the troubles in the area had ended, fifteen more brothers and sisters arrived from Pennsylvania to help populate the settlement, and by the end of the year Bethabara and Bethania each had a population of roughly seventy-five people.²⁵

From Wachovia's inception, the Moravian elders had intended to form a central town that would eventually become the headquarters for the southern province of the Moravian Church. Keeping this in mind, they used the towns of Bethabara and Bethania

²⁵ Reichel, *Moravians in North Carolina*, 42-62.

as a way to establish their presence in the area, setting up their farms, businesses, and trade networks, as well as their relationship with the secular groups in the area. By 1764, the elders had decided that the settlement in Wachovia was ready to found its central town, and a party led by Brother Frederick William Marshall, architect and head of the Moravian's southern province, set out to find a piece of land in the center of their holdings. They selected a site that was situated almost exactly in the center of Wachovia in 1765, and started the new settlement of Salem with eight single brothers in January of the following year. The Brethren built this new town with the specific intention of making it the center of the population for their southern province.

Unlike Bethabara and Bethania, which had been built according to the needs of the settlers as the group grew and changed, the elders planned the town of Salem carefully beforehand; Brother Marshall oversaw the entire operation. The center of the town consisted of a *Gemeinhaus*, Single Brothers' House, Single Sisters' House, general store, tavern, pottery, forge, apothecary, mill, sawmill, and farm. This basic structure was planned so well that it remains the core of the museum that is currently housed in the buildings. Once the population of Wachovia shifted to Salem, it stayed there for the duration of the theocratic period (1752-1857), making it the commercial, religious, and manufacturing center, while Bethabara and Bethania became farming communities.²⁶ When Salem became the administrative headquarters, and effectively, the only town in Wachovia, the Brethren in North Carolina ceased to be subordinate to the Pennsylvania settlement, no longer depending on it for guidance, supplies, and settlers.²⁷

²⁶ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 50-51.

²⁷ John H. Clewell, *History of Wachovia in North Carolina: The Unitas Fratrum or Moravian Church in North Carolina During a Century and a Half...1752-1902* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1902), 91.

From the foundation of their first communities on Count Zinzendorf's German estate, up until the founding of Wachovia, the Moravians practiced an early form of communism that they called *oeconomie*, or common housekeeping. The system developed along with the church, evolving from the European policy of each member contributing according to his or her own ability to the stricter American form that bears a more striking resemblance to modern understandings of communism. The community owned the means of production, such as land, tools, and machinery. The town then shared what was produced, with the elders controlling the distribution when they perceived that rationing was necessary. They also used *oeconomie* to help preserve their sense of community isolation. Even though the Moravians dealt with the outside world extensively in an economic sense, they still kept measures such as maintaining two general stores: one for the congregation and one for outsiders.²⁸ In Pennsylvania and into North Carolina, the communalist policies even applied to the living situation of the members of the community. Everyone, even married couples, lived in one large household, sharing domestic duties and responsibilities in a practice that was closely tied to their concept of choirs, which formed two even smaller units within this larger household.

The use and eventual decline of the practice of communal living can be seen in the settlement patterns in Wachovia. At first, the residents of Bethabara lived a completely communal life; then residents of Bethania pushed to be allowed to have family farms, even though the community owned both the land and the eventual produce. Eventually, Salem retained the communal conditions for single brothers and sisters, but gave fuller

²⁸ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 53.

autonomy to family households.²⁹ Even though their adherence to the tenets of *oeconomie* became less strict as the settlement and the church evolved, it remained an important part of the community, as well as a useful administrative tool for the elders.

The congregation based Wachovia's economic system on the land, which it in turn owned. By the time Salem became the center of Wachovia's population, the elders had developed a system of land distribution in which they leased parcels of land to individual members, with the retention of their lease dependent upon their compliance with the church.³⁰ By doing this, the elders maintained a semblance of control over the people in the community, in all aspects of their lives: religious, civic, and social. The general ideas of *oeconomie* were so critical to the Moravian political and social structure that the concept continued to have an influence on the community even as Salem's economy relaxed into socialism.

One of the most distinctive features of Moravian culture was the use of the choir system, which divided the members of the village into social groups based on age, sex, and marital status.³¹ Members of Moravian communities entered their first choir at the age of five or six, and they moved into the Single Brothers' and Sisters' house at roughly the age of thirteen. The choir to which a Moravian belonged changed according to the evolving circumstances of the member's life, such as age, marriage, and widowhood. Moravians saw choirs as a way to provide spiritual and social support to members who were in similar circumstances. The influence of choirs was so great that the two most influential ones, those of the Single Brothers' and Single Sisters', were

²⁹ Gollin, *Family Surrogates*, 650-58.

³⁰ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 54.

³¹ The term "choir" refers specifically to a method of social organization rather than the modern musical definition. ("Choir, n." Def. 6. OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/32118?rskey=6SBH10&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.)

each considered their own small economies, called *diaconies*.³² The Single Brothers' choir provided apprenticeships for younger members of the choir, training them for the many lucrative trades that Salem had developed; the Single Sisters' choir focused on missions and education, eventually developing Salem Academy and Salem College.

Moravian choirs were also closely tied to the communal aspect of the concept of *oeconomie*. Unlike most other early American groups, the Moravians placed the greatest societal importance on the choir rather than the family. The most basic social unit is the way in which a society instills its values, and by putting the choir in this position, the elders maintained control over the dissemination of ideals and practices in their communities. As historian Gillian Gollin states, "participation in the family inevitably detracts to some extent from participation in communal affairs by generating particularistic loyalties which compete with the individual's devotion to communal aims."³³ In the Moravian system, the choirs had the capacity to act as a surrogate for family, and were the primary way in which members worshipped. The effect of the choir system was so profound that it influenced the building plans for American communities such as Bethlehem and Salem, as evidenced by the economic and social importance placed on the single choir buildings. Choirs received the same duties that were commonly placed with the family in other contemporary societies, such as adherence to religious beliefs, education, and training in trades. By placing these important tasks outside the scope of the family unit, the Moravian Church made choirs the life-long guiding force for their members, securing allegiance to the community.³⁴

³² Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 56.

³³ Gollin, *Family Surrogates*, 651.

³⁴ Gollin, *Family Surrogates*, 650-655.

A significant aspect of Moravian communities was their dedication to keeping themselves isolated from the outside world. This practice began when the Unitas Fratrum was developing in Bohemia; since the movement grew out of a rebellion against the Catholic Church, it was in the Moravian's best interest to keep themselves insulated. Later, when the movement shifted to Count Zinzendorf's estate in Germany, the practice continued to be the safest course because of the large number of settlers who had emigrated illegally from their home countries. Isolationism was also used as a way to help preserve the Brethren's religious convictions and the community's cohesiveness. Their exclusivity facilitated this endeavor. The elders screened each incoming member closely before allowing entrance into the community, and continued to keep watch over him or her through the use of the choirs; any member who persistently opposed the rules of the community was banished.³⁵

To the Moravians, there was a strong connection between the intrusion of the outside world and the rise of sin and disobedience in their communities. This problem arose at times such as the American Revolutionary period. When the Moravian communities found themselves unable to resist all contact with the colonial government, they also found themselves unable to control completely the actions of their younger generations.³⁶ Because they were never capable of complete isolation in Wachovia, the Brethren were forced to take measures that placed their interaction with outsiders on their terms. These rules included the construction of guest quarters separate from those of the members, as well as a separate general store. In Europe, their isolationist policies were so strict that they did not even seek new members, but only accepted people who

³⁵ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 3-16.

³⁶ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 49-50.

sought them. While this severe form of the practice helped to preserve the exclusivity of the group during its formative period, the Brethren were forced to change their policies when the Moravian Church moved to America. Because they had come with evangelism as their express purpose, they were compelled to adopt more relaxed views on their isolation. Their new, more flexible policies helped the Moravians to set up an extensive trade network that gave them more economic freedom, as well as earned them a reputation that eventually led to their acquisition of Wachovia.

Education was an important part of the Moravians' culture, and resulted from the beliefs of their founder, John Hus, and their place in the early days of the Protestant Reformation. Like many other Protestant groups, the Moravians believed that individuals were capable of understanding the Bible on their own, and should be allowed to seek salvation privately. Consequently, they established their own printing press so that their members would have ready access to Bibles, for which the church provided its own translation. The Moravians were among the earliest groups in both Europe and America to implement compulsory education for their children.³⁷ The Moravian communities placed the responsibility for education with the choir; the curriculum was surprisingly varied for the time, and included subjects such as languages, math, history, geography, art, and music.³⁸ When the American branch of the Moravian Church was established, church members considered it to be an important part of their mission work to provide an education. The brothers and sisters did so in areas such as Wachovia, when they built a school for the children of the surrounding

³⁷ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 6-8.

³⁸ Gollin, *Family Surrogates*, 653.

community even before any Moravian children were present in the settlement.³⁹ In later years, they even taught slave children to read and write, in defiance of state law.⁴⁰

The Moravians had always made it their goal to stay out of the politics of the territory in which they happened to reside, and the two aspects of their doctrine that helped them in this endeavor were their refusal to take oaths and their refusal to bear arms. As a result of the special recognition that had been given to the Moravian Church by the British Parliament, they were not legally required to take part in these practices, but they were generally the only group in the community given this permission. This difference often caused many problems for the community at Wachovia.⁴¹ The first instances of animosity from the secular community came shortly after the settlement's founding. When a local militia was mustered, the new Moravian brothers were not required to participate, which angered many among the local population. The Brethren regained the community's trust when, during the wars with the Native Americans that came in later years, they built a fort around their settlement of Bethabara and allowed outsiders to take refuge. Thereafter, the Moravians built a reputation for a dedication to missions and the work put into their communities. The area's secular communities often considered the Moravians an asset to the region, despite their differences.⁴²

The Brethren's conscientious objections put them in the greatest danger in the 1760s and 1770s, when western North Carolina became embroiled in the Regulator Movement and the American Revolution. In 1768, a group of men from the backcountry formed a movement that came to known as the War of Regulation. Their goal was to reform the

³⁹ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 37.

⁴⁰ Davis, *Moravians in Europe and America*, 64.

⁴¹ Reichel, *Moravians in North Carolina*, 80-83.

⁴² Reichel, *Moravians in North Carolina*, 38-43.

courts and taxation laws, which they felt unjustly favored the wealthier eastern North Carolinians. When the Moravians refused to take an official position on the issue, both sides came to suspect their motives. Eventually, their need to comply with the new secular government that was forming forced the Brethren to prioritize these two beliefs. In 1775 the Test Act was passed, which required that all citizens swear their loyalty to the revolutionary cause or risk being declared traitors and having their land confiscated. In 1777, Moravian men were compelled to join the military, even though they offered to provide monetary support to the cause instead. They sent petitions to the North Carolina General Assembly asking to be relieved of these requirements in light of their beliefs, but initially only gained postponements. While the church was working with the General Assembly, it also had to deal with neighbors who, convinced that they would be declared traitors, began to encroach on their land. Eventually, in 1779, the state assembly passed a law declaring that if Moravians would swear allegiance to the Revolutionary cause they would be excused from military service, and would retain the rights to their land in exchange for doubled taxes. Faced with this decision, the Brethren swore their allegiance.⁴³

After the Moravian Brethren swore the oath of allegiance, their relationship with their neighbors improved drastically. Although they still refused to bear arms, they provided a significant amount of supplies to the Revolutionary cause, and even quartered troops at several periods during the war. Eventually, as had happened with the concept of *oeconomie*, the Brethren's allegiance to their conscientious objections evolved over the course of their time in North Carolina. Even during the American Revolution, while the

⁴³ Reichel, *Moravians in North Carolina*, 84-89.

elders and the older generation worked with the General Assembly, many of the younger generation took the oath of allegiance voluntarily.⁴⁴

In the nineteenth century, as the secular population in the area continued to grow, the church found Salem's isolationist policies increasingly difficult to maintain. As a result, the church was forced to relax its hold over the citizens, and the choirs took on less importance than they had enjoyed during the previous century. The main catalyst for this change was the creation of Forsyth County and its seat of Winston, which was built adjacent to Salem in 1849. There is a direct correlation between the growth of secular business in Salem and the decline of the choir system. This eventually drew the theocracy into a gradual decline that ended with its dissolution in 1857. It was at this point that private businesses were permitted places within the town. This allowed for the accumulation of personal wealth and indirectly the encroachment of class distinction, which was in direct opposition to the egalitarian nature of the choir system. The choir that managed to stay active for the longest period of time was the Single Sisters' choir, a circumstance that was partially due to the continued prosperity of Salem Academy and College, and partially to the measure of freedom that the choir offered women.

To understand Salem in the nineteenth century fully, it is necessary also to examine the Moravians' ideas regarding slavery. The Moravians had a complicated relationship with the institution. The group as a whole never reached a consensus; the viewpoints tended to be divided by region, with the Southern Province accepting and eventually practicing slavery, while the Northern Province abstained. Even though the two districts had a fundamental difference in opinion, the northern Moravians never denounced the actions of their southern counterparts. From the time that they arrived in the New World,

⁴⁴ Reichel, *Moravians in North Carolina*, 90-93.

they dealt extensively with those who practiced slavery. The Moravians' first encounter with the institution came when the group sent missionaries to the West Indies. Although the Moravians themselves did not own slaves at this time, they worked within the boundaries of the system.⁴⁵ The egalitarian missionaries sought to reach the people of the area, regardless of social status. They were therefore careful not to anger the slave holders, which could have potentially endangered their position.⁴⁶

The split in ideology came soon after the Southern Province was established. Even though the Moravians had not owned slaves up to this point, it was not necessarily because of any religious objections. While the Moravians of Wachovia believed that everyone was equal in the sight of God, they also believed that there were certain roles that each person was given in life, and were therefore able to justify slavery as something that was beyond their control. As Niven and Wright explain in *Old Salem: the Official Guidebook*, "Through these missionary efforts, many of the Moravians who came to North Carolina understood the workings of a slave-based economy. Like other church groups, they bent religious dogma to economic purpose to rationalize the moral and spiritual ramifications of slavery."⁴⁷ In 1763, when they needed help with Bethabara, the Brethren therefore felt no compunction about renting slaves from their secular neighbors. The Moravians in Wachovia gradually began to take on slaves, and by 1800 owned approximately seventy.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum, 1722-1957* (Bethlehem, PA: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education Moravian Church of America, 1967), 46-51.

⁴⁶ Hamilton and Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*, 251.

⁴⁷ Penelope Niven and Cornelia B. Wright, *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, Inc.), 14.

⁴⁸ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 14-30.

As racial prejudice began to develop throughout the secular south, the church originally tried to keep it from encroaching on their egalitarian society, but they were ultimately unsuccessful. This can be seen in the evolution of burial practices in Salem. When the official burial ground, God's Acre, was built in 1771, burials were conducted according to choir, but race was not a determining factor. By 1816, however, African Americans were being buried in a separate graveyard on the other side of town. Little by little, segregation also made its way into the worship services. The first step came when African American church members were relegated to either the back of the church or the balcony. Then, in 1822, the town created a separate church for African Americans, which is now known as St. Phillip's.⁴⁹

The Industrial Revolution helped to cement the changes taking place in Salem, allowing for the rise of mechanized industry that utilized slave labor, further increasing Moravian interests in the developing Confederate cause. After the dissolution of the theocratic government, Moravian ideology and loyalties gradually changed. With the outbreak of the Civil War, many of Salem's young men separated from the pacifist stance of the older generations of Moravian men and joined the Confederate Army. A Moravian bishop informally sanctioned this decision by publically offering prayers for their safety. As it had been during the American Revolution, Salem again became an important commercial center. During Reconstruction, however, Salem went into a period of economic decline because of factors such as the collapse of North Carolina banks, the loss of slave labor, and the rise of Winston's tobacco industry. As the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth century began, the commercial and population center of the area shifted to Winston, and Salem began to be neglected. When Salem merged

⁴⁹ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 86-87.

with the neighboring town of Winston to become Winston-Salem in 1913, the old town of Salem adopted the area's mainstream culture, and was in serious danger of losing its identity.⁵⁰

The Moravian Church and the towns set up by its members hold a unique place in the history of both the Protestant Reformation and colonial America. Their separatist policies helped to ensure that their beliefs and practices were allowed to develop independently from outside culture. One of the most divergent aspects of Moravian culture in both Europe and America was the freedom given to women religiously, socially, and economically.

⁵⁰ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 70-90.

Chapter 3: Women in the Moravian Church

In contrast to the patriarchal organization that was common in many European and American societies during the time period in which the Moravian Church developed and thrived, the Moravians employed a more egalitarian approach. In conjunction with their prevailing societal practice of communalism, women received great freedom within their society. Consequently, they were active in the development of the Moravian Church and its communities in America, taking part socially, economically, and religiously. The autonomy provided by Moravian society stemmed from the choir system that allowed Moravian women to function as their own units within the larger framework of the towns in which they lived. Members of the Moravian Church considered women to be an essential part of a fully functioning society, as a Salem minister explained: “to build a ‘complete community’ one had to construct and compartmentalize it the correct way ‘with all its choirs’.”¹

As with all of the other choirs, those belonging to women were run as separate administrative units directly subordinate to the town elders; no precedence was given based on age or sex. Through the choirs, Salem women took control of their religious, social, and economic lives, separate from the potentially controlling influence of male choirs. The sisters within Moravian communities even had traditions that were completely separate from those of their male counterparts, such as their traditional dress. Each female choir was assigned a color, and the women ceremoniously changed the ribbons on their caps each time they graduated to a new choir. These traditions

¹ Aaron S. Fogleman, “Women on the Trail in Colonial America: A Travel Journal of German Moravians Migrating from Pennsylvania to North Carolina in 1766,” *Pennsylvania History* 61, no. 2 (April 1994): 206-34, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27773721>, 228.

helped the women to bond together as a group, separate from outside forces within the community.²

Although the original intention behind the creation of choirs was to provide support groups in which church members could worship, Salem women expanded the concept by using the choirs as a means to fulfill what they considered to be their Christian duties in the community. They were most active in the fields of missions and education, with the Single Sisters' choir emerging as the most active. As an independent economic unit, the Single Sisters had the means to build a reputation for philanthropy that eventually became one of the most enduring legacies of the town of Salem. The educational institutions that were founded and run as part of their work in the community, Salem Academy and Salem College, continue as prestigious institutions, admitting students from around the world.³

Women occupied official positions that were interspersed throughout Moravian society. Many offices that women held in the Moravian Church were not unusual for a Protestant denomination; it was unique, however, that these positions were given to both men and women, whereas most of the other denominations gave them exclusively to men. In keeping with the concept of societal division by sex, as exemplified by the choirs, formal offices and their corresponding responsibilities were divided up between men and women. The highest position that women commonly achieved was that of deaconess. The Moravians considered women in this position to be spiritual leaders and helpers within the church; they were also permitted to serve the holy sacrament and

² Elizabeth L. Myers, *A Century of Moravian Sisters: A Record of Christian Community Life* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1918), 37-39.

³ Penelope Niven, and Cornelia B. Wright, *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, Inc.), 62-65.

rites independently. Many times, the women were ordained jointly with their husbands in preparation for serving a congregation as missionaries; it was also not unusual for Single Sisters to be similarly ordained, in accordance with their activities within the church and community. Women were also given the position of acolyte, which was a member of the *Unitas Fratrum* who had been formally designated for service within the church. An acolyte was allowed to help distribute the holy sacrament during services, but was not permitted to do so independently. This was an important and useful job, because the Moravians worshipped in choirs, and this allowed them to take control of all aspects of worship. One of the most common, but ultimately one of the most important, jobs within the community was that of *labouress*. This position put a woman in charge of the spiritual well-being of a particular choir. *Labouresses* served as mentors, in both a spiritual and a practical sense. Moravian women often mentioned in their memoirs that the *labouress* of their choir helped them through transitions such as conversion, employment, and marriage. Many times, the choir in which the woman worked was her own, but this was not necessarily always the case.⁴

Because choirs were so central to the structure of Moravian society, they formed the ideal path for women to choose to exercise power in their lives and to have an influence on the community. The highest position that a Moravian woman could reach within the choir system was that of *eldress*, which put the chosen woman in charge of all the women in her choir. The absolute highest office that a female member of the Moravian Church could hold was that of head *eldress*. Women designated as head *eldresses* were instrumental to the success of the Moravian Church during its formative and

⁴ Katherine L. Faull, ed., *Moravian Women's Memoirs: Their Related Lives, 1750-1820* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 152.

crucial missionary years in the eighteenth century. Anna Nitschmann exemplifies the trust that was placed in women in Moravian society. A native of Moravia, Nitschmann was one of the founding members of the renewed *Unitas Fratrum*. When she was only fourteen, she was selected by lot, a method often used by the church to discern God's will, to be the head eldress of Herrnhut. Nitschmann made the most of this position: she organized the first Single Sister's choir, briefly served as head of the church at Herrnhut at the age of eighteen, and traveled with Count Zinzendorf as a missionary and to set up new congregations. As chief eldress of the Moravian Church, she presided over meetings, cast the deciding vote on matters before the church council, and even administered last rites. After Count Zinzendorf was widowed, he and Nitschmann saw that an alliance would be advantageous for the church, so they married. Together they formed a solidified figurehead and a stable base from which decisions could be made as the congregation spread out across Europe and North America.⁵

When Count Zinzendorf and Anna Nitschmann died within weeks of one another in 1760, the *Unitas Fratrum* as a whole was in a vulnerable stage in its evolution. Two of its main congregations, Bethlehem and Wachovia, were less than twenty and ten years old respectively. The North American churches were also beginning the slow transition from a communal *oeconomie*⁶ to a household *oeconomie*. It is a testament to the value that Moravians put on women that the loss of Anna Nitschmann was felt so deeply during this time. The elders in Herrnhut, which was still the main base of power for the church, realized that in the absence of two of its original leaders, the *Unitas Fratrum* could fall apart. They decided, therefore, that they must choose the new leaders

⁵ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 13.

⁶ *Oeconomie* is the term used to describe the Moravian's communal households and the subsequent social and religious aspects. (Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 19.)

carefully. As had happened with the first generation of leaders, the elders chose a man and a woman to help oversee the changes that were going on in the church at the time.⁷

The chosen woman was Anna Johanna Seidel, nee Piesch, Nitschmann's niece. Seidel was the perfect choice for the leadership position and its responsibilities as the Moravian Church moved forward in the next step of its development. The church had been an integral part of her life from birth. Though she was not an orphan, members of the congregation raised Seidel in Herrnhut, a practice that would become prevalent in North America. She began to take part in community activities at age eleven, when she participated in the Hourly Intercessions. This was an initiative designed to ensure that prayers were being offered constantly throughout the day; individuals pledged to spend one hour per day in prayer for the church, in response to opposition from outside groups. Seidel began her career in the church at age fourteen when she was put in charge of the children's choir in Marienborn, Germany. At fifteen, she became eldress of the Greater Girls' choir in Herrnhag, and at nineteen was named *labouress* of the town's Single Sisters' choir. Finally, at age twenty-two, she received the highest position possible for an unmarried woman: General Eldress of All Single Sisters' choirs. This new status put her in charge of the female members of the Moravian Church. Upon the death of Zinzendorf and Nitschmann, along with her new responsibilities as leader of the Moravian Church, Seidel also had to face the responsibility of marriage. Even though she had not planned to marry, she accepted that marriage to Nathaniel Seidel, a fellow church leader, would help to solidify leadership and move the church forward.

⁷ Faull, *Moravian Women's Memoirs*, 121-129.

After their marriage, the Seidels moved to North America to oversee the official change from a communal *oeconomie* to a household *oeconomie*.⁸

Even though not every female member of the Moravian Church was destined to become a leader in the church, or even of a choir, there were a variety of jobs available. Choirs within Moravian towns such as Salem worked with one another to form a society, but the choirs themselves were largely self-sufficient. This was especially true for the choirs that lived communally. By the time that Salem was built, the practice of multi-family households under the general *oeconomie* had given way to the newer practice of household *oeconomies*. The change meant that married couples were now free, even expected, to form their own households, even though they maintained close contact with their separate choirs. The same was not expected for the choirs that comprised the unmarried women of the town, the Single Sisters' and Widows' choirs. The choirs maintained their common household status and there were many jobs that required this setup. As *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook* explains: "The Single Sisters worked together to provide for their own needs, from cooking to housekeeping, to weaving and making clothes, to growing their own food."⁹ They also worked outside of the household in businesses such as the school for girls, the weaving business, and the laundry business. The sisters took care of one another, both physically and spiritually, as well. In *Moravian Women's Memoirs: Their Related Lives, 1750-1820*, numerous sisters described the positive influence that fellowship and constant contact with their fellow choir members exerted on their faith. Many women liked the way of life in the Single Sisters' Choir so well that they were hesitant to marry. Sister Maria Agnes Rothe wrote

⁸ Faull, *Moravian Women's Memoirs*, 121-129.

⁹ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 62.

regarding her marriage: “Because I enjoyed so much good in the Single Sisters’ Choir and had lived in the same way very contentedly, it was very hard for me when...the call came to enter marriage.”¹⁰ There were also sisters in the choirs who were assigned to work as nurses. In *Moravian Women’s Memoirs*, the widowed sisters spoke particularly fondly about the care they received. Many of these women did not have families who were capable of caring for them through sickness or old age, but Moravian society made them a priority from birth to death.

A unique aspect of Moravian society was the attitude toward education, which involved the belief that there should be equal education for men and women. This conviction was a product of the Protestant tenet that all individuals should be given the tools to seek salvation for themselves. The educated women who participated in Moravian society helped to produce a significant portion of the records that are now available in Moravian Church archives. In time, their educational work became one of the greatest legacies of the Wachovia settlement. Salem Academy and Salem College, schools for girls that were founded for and run by the Single Women’s choir, continue to be thriving institutions.

To further the education of the women of Wachovia, Salem College was founded in 1772, making it the oldest school for girls in the southern United States. The institution began as a school for the Moravian girls of the area, but quickly attracted the attention of the surrounding community. In 1802, the elders of Salem allowed outsiders to enroll their children, making the formerly small institution into a boarding school, named “The Boarding School for Female Education in Salem, N.C.” The school grew quickly, but enrollment was highest when, during the Civil War, many girls were sent to Salem in the

¹⁰ Faull, *Moravian Women’s Memoirs*, 120.

hope that, as a religious institution, it would be a safe environment. This trust was well placed, and the school continued operations throughout the war, despite Union occupation of the area. In 1866, the name was again changed, this time to “Salem Academy and College,” which remains the institution’s formal name. The school’s curriculum was designed to provide the girls with an education, as well as a set of practical skills that would be useful for life in an area that was still quite rural. This curriculum evolved as the time period and student’s needs changed, gradually focusing more on formal studies and less on practical skills.¹¹ In modern times, Salem Academy and Salem College function as two different schools under the authority of the same institution. Salem Academy is a prestigious, private high school, while Salem College is one of the most highly acclaimed colleges in the Southern United States. Both schools maintain all-female enrollment policies.

For Salem women, missionary work and education were intimately connected. One of the main reasons why the Moravian Church decided to form a southern province was to create a base that would allow members to minister to the Native Americans of the area. During Wachovia’s early years, the tense relationship between Native Americans and all European groups, set off by the French and Indian War, hindered the Brethren’s efforts. Even during this troubled time, the Moravians were mindful of their mission, and endeavored to maintain as amicable a relationship as possible. As a result of the aid given by the settlers in the Dutch Fort to groups of Cherokees, they received permission to come within the tribes’ settlements to teach their children. The Moravians were unable to capitalize on this offer for many years because of the French and Indian War, followed by the Regulator Movement and the American Revolution. In 1801, however,

¹¹ Salem College, *Salem College: 175th Anniversary, 1772-1947* (Winston-Salem, NC: 1947), 2-7.

after Salem had become firmly established, they worked with the Cherokees to establish a mission and school in the Native American territory. Women played a large part in these efforts, and many educators from Salem Academy became involved with the mission to educate the Native American children.¹² Later, in 1822, the sisters from the various choirs in the congregation at Salem formed the “Salem Female Missionary Society.” The new society’s purpose was to educate and convert the African American population of the area. Moravian women were instrumental in providing spiritual instruction to this population, and even helped to begin a congregation for them.¹³ In 1835, a “Home Missionary Society” was formed to help organize the effort of the brothers and sisters of the congregation who wished to minister to the surrounding area.¹⁴

Marriage in Moravian society was quite different from modern conceptions of the institution. Individual citizens were free to choose their potential partners, but the elders had a hand in the approval process, reserving the right to approve or to disallow a proposed marriage based on the reputation of one or both of the citizens, and use of the lot. In fact, *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook* states that: “No marriage could go forward without...approval, and no Sister could be compelled to marry against her will.”¹⁵ It was very common, though, for marriages to resemble closely a business or diplomatic arrangement, as mentioned previously in the case of Anna Johanna Piesch and Nathaniel Seidel. Marriages were proposed to couples with skills or vocations that were a good match. For example, many times a preacher was paired with a teacher,

¹² Levin T. Reichel, *The Moravians in North Carolina: An Authentic History* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1968), 132-138.

¹³ Reichel, *Moravians in North Carolina*, 139-141.

¹⁴ Reichel, *Moravians in North Carolina*, 143-144.

¹⁵ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 33.

and then the couple was sent out to establish new congregations or to do mission work. A significant proportion of the married and widowed women included in *Moravian Women's Memoirs* discussed marriage as a "calling." This language is reminiscent of ecclesiastical writings of missionaries, as if the women connected the idea of marriage with a duty to God. Sister Maria Elizabeth Spohn Reitzenbach recorded that when the idea of marriage was proposed to her: "I must admit I found it indescribably hard to take this step and to leave my Single Sisters' Choir. Only the thought that it was my duty to do everything for the love of my dear savior...made me give myself up to this."¹⁶

This is not to say that all Moravians were placed in arranged marriages. It was not uncommon for married couples to enter the congregation, or even for a married man or woman to enter the church while his or her spouse did not. One commonality in all of the marriages, though, was that an individual's relationship with God remained the top priority. There was even a case where a woman joined the Moravian Church and remained with the congregation, even after her husband relocated their children to a remote area in protest to her conversion.¹⁷

Finally, it is important to consider the relationship that the Salem women had with the town in general, as well as the outside community. At times the secular communities with which they came into contact were shocked by the degree of freedom that Moravian women enjoyed. This attitude caused trouble in situations such as the journeys that largely all-female parties took when migrating from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to Wachovia, North Carolina. The travel diary of Salome Meurer, a woman who took part in one of these migrations in 1766, recorded that their group

¹⁶ Faull, *Moravian Women's Memoirs*, 116.

¹⁷ Faull, *Moravian Women's Memoirs*, 94-97.

attracted much unwanted attention from the male populations of the communities they passed on their journey. She recorded that “crowds of men gathered to watch, crack jokes, make passes at them, demonstrate their talents for consuming alcohol, or provide gentlemanly assistance.” She even recounted kidnapping attempts made by locals in an area in which they had stopped.¹⁸

From its formation during the Protestant Reformation, the Moravian Church was dedicated to the idea of equality before God. As a result, the Moravians formed an egalitarian society in which women had economic, social, and religious freedom. These women were active in their societies, took leadership roles in the church and the home, and were an essential part of the towns in which they lived.

¹⁸ Fogleman, *Women on the Trail*, 206-211.

Chapter 4: The Development of Old Salem Museums and Gardens

Although Old Salem's formerly theocratic community joined with the secular community of Winston in 1913, the culture of the Moravians who settled the town remains a testament to the preservation efforts undertaken by the city of Winston-Salem. The National Park Service listed the Old Salem Historic District, located in present-day Winston-Salem, as a landmark in 1966. The site includes a living history museum and the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA). Old Salem Museums and Gardens, a non-profit organization founded in 1950 for the specific purpose of the restoration and preservation of the town, owns and operates the facilities housed within the district. The Old Salem Historic District is a product of continuous efforts undertaken first by private citizens, and then by the local and state governments to preserve an important part of the history of North Carolina. The city of Winston-Salem is still intimately involved in the preservation of its historic district, explaining in its design guidelines that:

The primary objectives of the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission are to support the restoration and interpretation of Salem; to view the community as a coherent whole; and further, to place the community within its historical context which dates from 1766-1856.¹

The ordinances that created and manage the Old Salem Historic District hold a special place in the history of North Carolina, in that it was not only the first historic district in the state, but it also served as a model for other ordinances.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, concerned citizens of Winston-Salem who had the foresight to see the importance of the conservation of Old Salem,

¹ Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission, *Old Salem Historic District Design Review Guidelines* (Winston-Salem, NC: City-County Planning Department of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, North Carolina, 2012), 1.

fought new businesses and the expansion of Salem College. Women of Winston-Salem were instrumental in these early efforts. They actively fought to preserve older buildings, sometimes using their own resources, as when Ada Allen leased Salem Tavern and lived in the building with her sisters to keep the lot from being turned over to commercial use in 1929. During the 1930s and 1940s, many local people and groups sponsored the restoration of structures around the town, including the Alumnae Association of Salem College, which funded the restoration of the 1805 Girls' Boarding School wash house. Mary Babcock, daughter of the influential Winston-Salem business owner R.J. Reynolds, was one of the first active proponents of creating an entire historic district from the buildings that were being preserved. As a result of her interest, she and her husband contributed significantly to the preservation efforts.²

Around 1938, encouraged by the restoration efforts that had been so successful in Williamsburg, Virginia, some groups took the step of contacting financial backers with the hopes of doing something similar in Old Salem. Interest was piqued and plans were begun, but World War Two interrupted the progress, and all attention was devoted to the war effort. During this time, the Chamber of Commerce tried to keep interest in post-war restoration plans, but by the end, the organization realized that it was ill-equipped for the task and that the organization needed professional help. In addition, Wake Forest University moved to Winston-Salem at this time, and the prospect of an even larger population and growth in businesses encouraged the efforts to make the preservation part of the town legal code. In 1946, the city of Winston-Salem hired Russell VanNest Black to help develop a plan for full-scale restoration efforts. The city

² Frances Griffin, *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, Incorporated, 1970), 5.

adopted an official ordinance in December 1948 that created the Old Salem Historic District. Although the restoration of Old Salem was still prominent in the minds of those in the organization, the new zoning laws that helped to create the new district did little more than box in the area, and did not facilitate the city's future plans.³

In the meantime, opposition to the historic zoning grew more intense. The legal stance of those interested in preservation was shaky, given that such actions had not yet been undertaken in North Carolina. To help the preservation efforts, the mayor's office formed an investigative committee in 1950 to advance the plans. The committee was broken into three groups: a survey group to determine what needed to be done, a properties group to look into which properties could and should be obtained, and a permanent program group to offer suggestions regarding making the committee permanent. The day after the committee's findings were presented to the public, the Board of Alderman adopted the "Resolution Commending the Organization of Old Salem, Incorporated, and Expressing the Willingness of the City of Winston-Salem to Cooperate in the Restoration of Old Salem." The organization was formalized on May 22, 1950, and named Old Salem, Inc., the name by which it was known until 2006, when the name was changed to Old Salem Museums and Gardens. Trustees from Old Salem, Inc. immediately went on a trip to Williamsburg, Virginia, to make observations and get advice for the future.⁴

In the fiscal year of 1950-1951, Old Salem, Inc. obtained tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service. During this year, the organization's trustees and private citizens raised \$45,000 to help establish funding for the project. Many of these private

³ Penelope Niven and Cornelia B. Wright, *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, Inc.), 5-13.

⁴ Griffin, *Adventure in Historic Preservation*, 21-23.

citizens are listed as couples, but this does not mean that the women of Winston-Salem were not active workers themselves, both with civic groups and as individuals. One of the most active of these groups was the Colonial Dames, who signed the first petition for rezoning and were instrumental in gaining awareness for the cause, even contributing financially. When a business owner, R. Howard Gaines, wanted to build a new store in Old Salem on a site that would put historic property in danger, the Colonial Dames bought part of the land to prevent the construction. A fellow citizen of Winston-Salem, Ruth Meinung, also sold Gaines property in a more suitable part of town to ensure the safety of Old Salem's structures. Two local women were part of the first Board of Architectural review: Emma C. Griffith, who represented the Winston-Salem Garden Club Council, and Mary Reynolds Babcock, a local philanthropist. Adelaide Fries, a Moravian and native of Salem, served as the town's archivist and was a member of the Citizen's Committee for the Preservation of Historic Salem. Fries was instrumental in building a usable database of records that were referenced when the museum was put together. Furthermore, five out of the twenty-two members of the original board of trustees were women.⁵

Once Old Salem, Inc. obtained funding and support from the community, the organization immediately got to work leasing and buying properties that were deemed important, such as the Salem Tavern, the Boys' School, and the Single Brothers' House. Gradually, the group made progress in the venture to turn the historic district into a preserved community, and as this growth became apparent, the opposition to the preservation efforts slowed. Even though the position of the Old Salem Historic District was becoming more secure, the Winston-Salem government still desired to improve the

⁵ Griffin, *Adventure in Historic Preservation*, 9-15.

preservationists' legal standing. In 1964, a report that Philip P. Green Jr., Assistant Director of the Institute of Government, produced stated that the need still existed for the regulation of styles in adjacent areas that had the potential to affect the aesthetic appeal of Old Salem.⁶

Efforts were immediately undertaken to pass state-wide legislation that would help to clarify Winston-Salem's legal position. While North Carolina's legislature was not opposed to the idea, legislators were hesitant to enact sweeping, statewide legislation. Edenton, Bath, and Halifax, towns that had historic buildings that they were interested in preserving, also expressed their support. This statewide enthusiasm and the tireless efforts of the workers in Winston-Salem helped to convince the legislature, and the bill was passed in 1965. Its purpose was stated as follows: "to preserve the historic integrity of historic municipalities, stabilize and improve property values in the district, enhance civic beauty, strengthen the local economy, and to promote the use of such districts across the state."⁷ The most important aspect of this law is that it legalized the efforts that had been undertaken in Winston-Salem. In 1966, the city went even further and adopted an ordinance that defined the ways in which the Old Salem Historic District might be used. These uses ranged from homes, to fire stations, to public meeting spaces, and public parks. This last ordinance made it possible for Old Salem to be a part of Winston-Salem as a whole: people were allowed to come in and interact with Old Salem in a way that still respected the historic integrity of the project.⁸ Women served on the committees throughout the entire evolution of Old Salem, from its initial efforts at

⁶ Griffin, *Adventure in Historic Preservation*, 25-28.

⁷ North Carolina General Assembly, *An Act Authorizing Municipalities to Designate and Protect Historic Buildings and Districts*, Session Law 289, *Session Laws and Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly [1963-1965]*: 561-563.

⁸ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 23-30.

forming a district and city ordinances, to the creation of Old Salem, Inc. As time went on, however, more and more women's contributions tended to be relegated to subordinate roles, as the museum turned into a business, which is reflected in the twenty-first century museum experience.⁹

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw large-scale societal changes in Salem. Because of these alterations, the town was in danger of becoming assimilated into general American culture and losing its historical identity. Concerned citizens of Winston-Salem pulled together to form an organization to help preserve this important part of the town's history. As had been the case throughout the history of Salem, women were instrumental in these efforts; they furthered the cause by raising money and awareness and by helping to found the organization Old Salem, Inc. These efforts are continued in the present day by the museum's current incarnation, Old Salem Museums and Gardens, which is still an integral part of the city of Winston-Salem.

⁹ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 63-73.

Chapter 5: Old Salem Museums and Gardens in the Present Day

Given that Moravian women played such a significant role in the founding, development, and eventual prosperity of Salem, one would expect that they would be appropriately represented and portrayed at the living museum at Old Salem Museums and Gardens. This is not to say that the history of women should be the focus of the majority of the exhibits and material covered at the museum. To portray the history of Salem accurately, however, it is necessary to represent sufficiently all of the groups that were active in the town. This is an area in which the museum could make considerable improvements. Although Old Salem Museums and Gardens does not ignore women in either the exhibits or in the demonstrations by the historical interpreters, much of the material discusses the town's history from either a male or gender neutral perspective. The museum tends to rely on the presence of Salem College and Salem Academy, located adjacent to the museum, to represent the female influence in the town. These are separate institutions, however, and Old Salem is not affiliated with the material the schools present, nor can it provide interpreters. Old Salem's interpretation of the female history of the town could be greatly improved by fostering a more active relationship with these schools, because the history of these three institutions is so closely intertwined.

Although Old Salem Museums and Gardens consists mainly of a living history museum, several parts of the site are dedicated to written exhibits. These displays are present from the beginning of the tour, with explanatory exhibits in the visitor center, signs throughout the town explaining Moravian culture and architectural elements, and several detailed exhibits in some of the houses that reflect the history of their former

owners. The first exhibit that guests encounter is located in the visitor center, and consists of a series of free-standing panels that run the length of the building. Each side of a panel is dedicated to a topic that helps to explain the history and culture of the Moravian Church and the town of Salem, gives information on the attractions that Old Salem Museums and Gardens has to offer, and even features brief biographies of influential citizens. Of the approximately twenty topics that are discussed, only one panel is dedicated directly to the history of women. This panel does a good job of stressing the active role that women played in the Salem community, stating that “women were uniquely regarded in Salem compared to other communities...they were given a voice in congregational affairs, and held seats on some governing boards.”¹ The panel goes on to describe the different activities in which Salem women were engaged, in both domestic and business spheres.

This display is the most comprehensive and direct representation of women that Old Salem Museums and Gardens offers, but the reference pales in comparison to the depth of information that the other panels offer regarding Salem’s men. Instead of simply mentioning the trades in which men were involved, there are several panels that single out a male artisan and use his biography to give an introduction to his trade’s place in the town’s history. Not all of the panels are dedicated to the history of a specific gender, however. Many labels deal with the history or culture of the Moravians as a whole, but taken as a group the most that they offer is a gender neutral perspective, a problem that is echoed throughout the town in the exhibits and demonstrations. While

¹ Old Salem Museums and Gardens, “Women and Children in Salem,” Old Salem Museums and Gardens, Winston-Salem, NC.

the gender neutral topics are an important part of the museum's interpretation, they are not a replacement for the female-centered topics that are not mentioned.²

As a living history museum, Old Salem Museums and Gardens makes the greatest impact through town tours and the personal interaction between visitors, historical interpreters, and the buildings themselves. A significant aspect of the town tours is the demonstrations that can be found throughout Old Salem, which include interpreters who practice trades. There are demonstrations that take place in various shops, such as the apothecary and gunsmith, as well as presentations in the Single Brothers' House that include the tailor, joiner, and tinsmith. Throughout the town, there are also several kitchen demonstrations in buildings, such as the Vierling House and Salem Tavern, in which interpreters give presentations designed to showcase Salem's domestic life.

The demonstrations are informative, and the historical interpreters are knowledgeable and able to present accurately the themes to which they are assigned. The gender distribution of the interpreters is also fairly equal, but it is important to note that a large portion of the female interpretive staff is placed in the kitchen. An important exception to this is the staff member in the front room of the Single Brothers' House. This interpreter is often female and gives an introduction to the concept of choirs, speaking most specifically regarding the two single choirs. Even though the demonstration takes place in a building that was traditionally associated exclusively with the town's men, it is the one that deals most explicitly with the history of women. It is important to note that even as the interpreter speaks on the role of women in Salem, her presentation must also include an overview of all the other choirs. In addition, she must give an explanation of the trade demonstrations that the visitors will encounter in the

² Personal observation, based on visits to Old Salem Museums and Gardens, 2011-2012.

building, all of which are done by men. The demonstrations regarding domestic life in Salem that take place in the kitchens are important, given that domestic activities were a significant part of women's life in the town, but to portray their lives comprehensively, additional topics should be required.³

Women played a significant role in Salem's development and prosperity, both in and out of the home. They took a leading role in the education of the town's children, ran their own businesses, and were heavily involved in worship services. In addition to Salem Academy and College, they ran a laundry and a weaving business, sold vegetables from their gardens, and when the workload was heavy, assisted in the tailor's shop.⁴ In fact, the Single Sisters' choir was so economically important to the town that when the town elders wanted to build on a piece of property that the Single Sisters' choir used for its laundry business, they successfully petitioned that the decision be overturned.⁵ The museum already does a good job of including events and case studies that showcase how men were active in Salem's development, but it would be helpful to include cases where women exerted influence as well. Since such a significant portion of female involvement in Salem was focused on education, it would be ideal if Old Salem Museums and Gardens and Salem College could create a more interactive relationship. The college does operate a museum that focuses on female history, but it does not have interpreters. If either institution were to add this aspect, the Single Sisters' Museum would be significantly more effective.

³ Personal observation, based on visits to Old Salem Museums and Gardens, 2011-2012.

⁴ Penelope Niven, and Cornelia B. Wright, *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, Inc.), 31-37.

⁵ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 68.

The literature that Old Salem Museums and Gardens has produced presents a contradictory picture on the subject of women, especially when it is combined with the town tours and exhibits. The books that were designed to present a history of the town of Salem and give visitors an idea of what the museum offers actually have more to say about the history of the town's female population than the current town tour. *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook*, *A Walk Through Old Salem*, and *Old Salem in Pictures* are all careful to give a comprehensive overview of the town of Salem.⁶ All three provide interesting insight into the ways in which women interacted with the community as a whole, emphasizing the businesses in which they were involved and their participation in the church. *Old Salem in Pictures* even goes so far as to include women in most of the pictures of historical interpreters.⁷



⁶ Frances Griffin and Bruce Roberts, *Old Salem in Pictures* (Charlotte, NC: McNally and Loftin, 1966).

⁷ Griffin and Roberts, *Old Salem in Pictures*, 50.

A Walk Through Old Salem contributes to the subject by including a description of the Single Sisters' House, even though it is not an official part of the museum or town tour. By far the most comprehensive mention of women in Salem is found in *Old Salem: The Official Guidebook*. As the guidebook goes through the history and culture of Salem, it includes details of female participation in the community and even comments on the importance accorded to women in Moravian society. The guidebook pays special attention to the Single Sisters' choir, explaining that "the Moravians choir system gave women a voice in congregation affairs....Women could hold positions of authority and have a say in issues that concerned them."⁸ Not only does the book include information on the educational ventures of Salem women, but it also claims that "women's contributions to economic life were also crucial to Salem's success."⁹ The amount of attention that has been devoted to women in the books printed by and on behalf of Old Salem Museums and Gardens establishes that the museum is aware of the importance of women to Moravian society. More recent materials produced by the museum mention women far less than these sources. The map that is given to visitors before they enter the town mentions women only cursorily, yet is not completely gender neutral, as it mentions specifically the male demonstrations that are available.¹⁰ The institution's annual financial reports also do not mention women when given the opportunity.¹¹ These reports speak extensively about the ongoing efforts of Old Salem Museums and Gardens to expand its interpretation of Salem's history, saying that "a major challenge

⁸ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 62.

⁹ Niven and Wright, *Official Guidebook*, 31.

¹⁰ Old Salem Museums and Gardens, "Visitor's Guide to Salem."

¹¹ Old Salem Incorporated, *Annual Report*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem Incorporated, 1966-2005).

for Old Salem, Inc. is to justly tell that story and clearly explain the site to visitors.”¹² The reports even detail the importance of representing different groups that are sometimes overlooked, such as African Americans, but they do not mention female interpretation in the town.

Salem College created and operates a museum that is located in the building that was once the house for the Single Sisters’ choir.¹³ The school is working to restore the Single Sisters’ House and has placed exhibits within the building that showcase the history of women in Salem, most specifically the Single Sisters’ choir. The museum was designed by members of the college, Marianna Thomas Architects (a company from Philadelphia with historic preservation experience)¹⁴ and Gene Capps, who also wrote “*A Laudable Example for Others*”: *The Moravians and Their Town of Salem*. The exhibits describe the history of the school as it developed, and include biographical sketches of women who played important roles within the school. There is also a timeline of important events from the school’s founding in 1772 to the present, as well as pictorial histories and excavated portions of the building. These displays are a useful resource for informing the public about the role that women played in the development of Salem College and Salem Academy, and the role that these schools have played in the town of Salem over the years. They are, however, the only resources available at the Single Sisters’ Museum. Unlike most of the buildings at Old Salem Museums and Gardens, Salem College does not provide historical interpreters, who would allow visitors to ask more personalized and thorough questions than the exhibits can answer. Given this

¹² Old Salem Incorporated, *Annual Report*, (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem Incorporated, 1998).

¹³ Salem College, “Single Sisters Museum,” <http://www.salem.edu/about/our-history/single-sisters-museum>.

¹⁴ Salem College, “Single Sisters Museum,” *Salem College*, 2012, <http://www.salem.edu/about/our-history/single-sisters-museum>.

situation, it is not realistic for Old Salem Museums and Gardens to rely on the two schools and the Single Sisters' Museum to represent the female history in the town, particularly since so much attention is devoted to the male experience in the corresponding Single Brothers' House. To represent men and women fairly, it would be necessary to add historical interpreters who deal specifically with female history either at Old Salem or the Single Sisters' Museum. The information that is presented about women in Salem could be improved by being diversified. The Single Sisters' Museum focuses mainly on just one of the choirs of women that were present throughout the history of Salem. It would be more accurate to include the activities of the different groups of women, as well as subjects that look beyond education.¹⁵

Old Salem Museums and Gardens is currently organized in a way that effectively presents Salem's history to various types of visitors. The museum provides textual and pictorial exhibits, as well as demonstrations. It also offers individual as well as group tours. The organization of the museum is sound, but Old Salem could be improved with the introduction of topics that showcase female history. According to the resources produced by Old Salem Museums and Gardens, the institution is aware of the contributions that women made to the town's development. It is therefore necessary to consider why women do not factor into more of the exhibits and demonstrations at Old Salem.

¹⁵ Personal observation, based on visits to Single Sisters' Museum, 2011-2012.

Chapter 6: The Reasons Behind Old Salem Museums and Gardens' Interpretive

Choices

Abundant evidence clearly demonstrates that women played an active and important role in the founding and development of the town of Salem. Considering that a large portion of this evidence can be found in literature produced by Old Salem Museums and Gardens, it seems contradictory that the museum portrays the town in a predominantly male, or at best gender neutral, light. This inconsistency leads to the question of why, since Old Salem Museums and Gardens is clearly aware of the history of female involvement in Salem, the museum does not utilize female interpreters, demonstrations, and history in general, more effectively. Furthermore, there is the question of whether this circumstance was a cognizant decision, or an unconscious precedent that was set and has since been perpetuated.

The question of whether the underrepresentation of women was a conscious decision made by Old Salem Museums and Gardens is by far the simplest to answer. Since the founding of Old Salem, Inc. in 1950, the organization has been careful and deliberate with its decisions, and the material that is currently presented at the museum and in the historic district is accurate, if incomplete. It can therefore be concluded that the museum is not aware that it is omitting a significant topic from its interpretation. Because Old Salem Museums and Gardens has been so careful with research on other topics, the discrepancy is clearly not the result of a conscious decision when the museum was begun, and the current situation simply showcases ongoing policies.

To understand the precedent that the founders of Old Salem, Inc. set, it is necessary to recognize who these people were. Although there were many important women who

helped to get the idea for Old Salem off the ground, such as Ada Allen and Mary Reynolds Babcock, it is crucial to remember that the organization was set up in a time in which the United States was a predominantly patriarchal society. This means that men took the more public and legislative roles, and relegated the women in the association to supportive roles within the effort. The first president of Old Salem, Inc., James A. Gray, along with a board of trustees that was 77 percent male, established the organization's original policies. Because of the era in which these members of the administration lived, instances of gender inequality would not have been obvious to them. They also would not have necessarily thought to look for exclusively female contributions to the development of Salem. This helps explain why the current situation at Old Salem has more in common with other colonial American societies than the historical record suggests.¹

Given this conclusion, it is possible to examine the question of why Old Salem's portrayal of women is so superficial and does not take advantage of the full range of female activity and history in the town. One of the reasons for this discrepancy comes from Old Salem, Inc.'s very early involvement with Colonial Williamsburg. Griffin explains in *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation* that the day after the organization was made official, "twenty-three persons, including several trustees, left on a three day study trip to Colonial Williamsburg."² On the surface, studying the older institution was a good move for Old Salem, Inc. Because Colonial Williamsburg had been running for nearly twenty-five years by the time that Old Salem, Inc. was founded, it made sense for the new institution to use the Virginia town as a model. When looking

¹ Frances Griffin, *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, Incorporated, 1970), 18-23.

² Griffin, *Adventure in Historic Preservation*, 23.

at the two sites, one can see many similarities in their makeup. They each portray early American societies that helped to define the larger areas in which the towns were placed. Both are multi-dimensional museums, with traditional museum exhibits, as well as interpreters and demonstrations. Each is set within a historic district that is adjacent to a larger, more modern setting. Finally, both preserved and restored existing buildings. Colonial Williamsburg's success made it a natural example of the type of museum that the founders of Old Salem Inc. wanted to create.

While developing a relationship with Colonial Williamsburg was a valid and largely effective approach, the differences between the two museums and the towns that they portray also created many opportunities for unintentional misdirection. These differences stem mainly from the very character of the towns and cover the categories of economics, religion, ethnicity, and governmental structure. Williamsburg, Virginia, like much of colonial America, was settled by English populations that were governed by bodies that, while having a relationship with their Anglican religion, were not controlled by it. As a result, their economies were free from the severe religious restrictions that were found in Salem, and they dealt with various groups as they saw fit. It is important to note, however, that all of these characteristics that made up Williamsburg and the bulk of America at the time were the very features that the Moravians were so careful to guard against.

On the other hand, a much smaller Germanic population founded Salem, and every aspect of its society was closely tied to its roots in the Moravian Church and the theocratic government that came along with it. For much of the time period that is covered by Old Salem Museums and Gardens, the Moravians had a communal

economy, but even as their business practices evolved to resemble those of the rest of colonial America more closely, they still maintained their policy of isolationism. Furthermore, while much of colonial America and, to a somewhat lesser extent, mid-twentieth-century America were patriarchal, Moravian societies were not. Although their highest governing bodies were made up of men, making Moravian societies not completely equal when it came to gender, women possessed more freedom and agency. They were allowed to participate in worship services, took a leading role in the education of the town's children, and were a powerful economic force within the town. If one looks at history from a patriarchal perspective, however, and sees examples from a patriarchal society, it would be easy to overlook this feminine freedom.

These features gave each of the towns distinct characters. Therefore, while Old Salem, Inc. was wise to look at Colonial Williamsburg for an example of how to develop interpretive demonstrations, it would have been all too easy for the members setting them up to allow mid-twentieth-century values and perceptions to influence their decisions. The people forming Old Salem were products of a society that derived many of its values from English culture, in a time when women were not as commonly found in the workplace. It was easy to look at the format of their museum from an Anglicized point of view, especially given the large role that non-Moravian members of the community played in the creation of Old Salem, Inc. These members were instrumental for their role as financial backers, but they joined in the effort because they were concerned citizens, and therefore were not as knowledgeable regarding the history of Salem and the role that women played in it.

Given these differences, a close relationship between Old Salem, Inc. and Colonial Williamsburg had the potential to be both rewarding and dangerous. There are enough similarities between the two institutions that it would have been possible for Old Salem to use Colonial Williamsburg as a real-life example of the kind of business to set up, but more importantly, the kind of exhibits and live demonstrations they wanted to use. It appears, however, that Old Salem formed a template for its demonstrational activities that was a combination of observances of other institutions and their surrounding society. In time, these practices became an ingrained part of Old Salem's exhibits and their interpretive program.

The relationship between Old Salem Museums and Gardens and Colonial Williamsburg continues in the present day. In its 2003 annual report, the museum included a section on John A. Caramia Jr., the new vice president of interpretation and education. The report describes his efforts to develop the St. Phillips' church complex³ and the new visitor center. Caramia came to Salem directly from working at Colonial Williamsburg, bringing the experience he had gotten there. Like the initial relationship between the two museums, this experience had the potential to be quite beneficial to Old Salem. He also, however, seems to have brought along a mindset that is more compatible with Williamsburg's more patriarchal, English representations, perpetuating the problem that already existed in Old Salem. Although he came in and looked at the demonstrations and interpretations, he did not find anything lacking in the female aspect, and instead focused on the African American aspect. This is a valid field to develop, but this decision shows that Caramia was aware of the need to pay more attention to minority groups, yet did not feel the need to focus on women as well. It is

³ St. Phillip's was the separate church founded for African Americans in 1861.

important to note that he was involved with the creation of the visitor center, which is the home of one of the largest textual exhibits at the museum, and yet mentions women only peripherally.⁴

As previously discussed, the current incarnation of the museum, Old Salem Museums and Gardens, has repeatedly shown that it is aware of the role women played in Salem's history by including them in their publications over the years. This leaves the question of why they have not updated their interpretive programs as they have updated their research. The most convincing answer is that their current program is an unconscious perpetuation of the mistakes made when the museum was started and the program was begun. Like the people who started Old Salem, Inc., the current administration of Old Salem Museums and Gardens grew up in a society that would not question this interpretation of Salem. Although in the roughly fifty years since the museum was started there have been significant changes in the way American society perceives gender, these changes have done little to alter the dominant cultural view of the past. It is generally accepted as fact that colonial American social groups were patriarchal, which is true for most groups who made up society at the time, but not for the Moravians.

Also central to the question of why Old Salem Museums and Gardens does not fully utilize female history and interpreters is the level of difficulty that this would involve. Most female history in Salem is currently housed at Salem College, not at the museum itself. It makes sense that any efforts to spotlight the history of Salem's female population would revolve around the school, because it was the most successful

⁴ Old Salem Museums and Gardens, *Annual Report 2003: Old Salem, Building a new Old Salem* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem Museums and Gardens, 2003), 4.

business started by the Single Sisters' choir, the most economically and socially important female choir in the town. Although Salem College has turned the Single Sisters' House into a museum, it is not staffed like Old Salem's corresponding Single Brothers' House. The museum also focuses heavily on the development of the school, and although its other businesses are mentioned, it would be beneficial to address them more fully. Several trades could be incorporated into live demonstrations, such as the linen weaving shop and the glovery business. Since the Single Brothers' House is currently used by Old Salem Museums and Gardens as the site for the explanation of the entire choir system, this building is a logical place for new, female-led demonstrations. The best solution, however, would be for the two institutions to create a relationship in which Old Salem could develop female-focused demonstrations at the Single Sisters' House, as well as throughout the town.

The question of how these practices came to be perpetuated for so long also leads one to question what the nature of female involvement in Old Salem Museums and Gardens has been over the years. *Old Salem: An Adventure in Historic Preservation* records that from 1950-1970, when the museum developed, none of the executive members of the institution were women, but 60 percent of the historic district commission was female.⁵ Once again, the literature produced by the museum itself also provides evidence. The annual reports released by the museum provide a listing of the board of trustees, both the officers and the general committee. In 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2005 overall, only 8 percent of Old Salem's officers were women, and only 20

⁵ Griffin, *Adventure in Historic Preservation*, 73.

percent of the general committee were female.⁶ In 2011, the situation was somewhat improved, with 33 percent of the executive staff being female, including the president, and 22 percent of the board of trustees. This trend of underrepresentation in the leading committees of Old Salem over the years can be tied to the American work environment. It is important to note, however, that while this environment changed significantly during the second half of the twentieth century, the representation of women in the committees did not.

Another reason why Old Salem does not use female interpretation more effectively is the economy. Joanna Roberts, Supervisor for Interpretation and Living History at Old Salem Museums and Gardens, offered further insight into the present representation of women at the site. She explained that because of budget restrictions, the museum has consolidated different branches of the interpretive department, and they no longer have as much staff as in the past. At one time, Old Salem had demonstrations that showcased laundry and soap making, which were successful occupations for Salem women. According to Roberts, however, the museum no longer has enough staff for these demonstrations. Because of the downsizing, the interpretive department has had to try to include women in existing interpretive situations, which for the most part include domestic situations. As a reaction to their budgetary limitations, Old Salem concentrates on specific stories rather than a blanket description. Furthermore, although the interpreters are provided with information for their demonstrations, the individual is allowed to develop his or her discussion according to his or her own interests.⁷

⁶ Old Salem Museums and Gardens, *Annual Report* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem Museums and Gardens, 1966-2005).

⁷ Joanna Roberts, Supervisor For Interpretation and Living History, Interview by Sarah Taylor, April 2013.

Roberts also explained that while Old Salem Museums and Gardens works with Salem College and Salem Academy when the goals match up, they do not have a particularly close relationship. The connection between the museum and the schools is also not unique. Old Salem Museums and Gardens has a more active relationship with the city, which owns the streets in the historic district, and the Home Moravian Church, which controls the activity in the square and from whom they lease many of the buildings in Old Salem. Although these groups have to communicate constantly because of their proximity and common goals, they are all very much separate entities.⁸

When asked if Old Salem Museums and Gardens and Salem College have ever considered developing a relationship where the museum could put interpreters into the Single Sisters' House, Roberts did not think that it was a viable plan. She once again cited the lack of staff as a main issue, and also mentioned that the space is not ideal for demonstrations and that coordination between the two institutions would be impractical. Roberts also stated that although she considers the history of women in Salem to be an important aspect of the town's story, the institution simply does not have the resources to do them justice.⁹

Even though the economic downturn during the twenty-first century has no doubt had a detrimental effect on Old Salem Museums and Gardens' resources and capabilities, there are still changes that it can make to increase female representation. Since an interpretive demonstration is a long term investment for the institution, it could still focus on women in the labels and textual exhibits that are scattered around the

⁸ Joanna Roberts, Supervisor For Interpretation and Living History, Interview by Sarah Taylor, April 2013.

⁹ Joanna Roberts, Supervisor For Interpretation and Living History, Interview by Sarah Taylor, April 2013.

town. Throughout Old Salem, from the visitor center to buildings, to signs along the street, there are labels and markers that showcase the history of men, both individually and collectively. Apart from the female focused exhibits at the Single Sister's House at Salem College, there are few mentions of women in the signs around Old Salem. For instance, at the visitor center, which holds the largest collection of labels at the institution, there is only one label that explicitly refers to female history. If Old Salem Museums and Gardens is not financially able to include more female focused demonstrations, it could still include the information textually through overviews and individual stories as they do with the men. Old Salem Museums and Gardens could also work to incorporate more female-focused stories and topics into demonstrations and interpretive material. As Roberts mentioned, it would take some time and money to translate some of the resources that have to do with Salem's women. It would, however, be worth it in the end for the museum to showcase the history of the town's entire population. Instances such as the omission of personal female stories from labels demonstrate that the museum is currently perpetuating the patriarchal mentality developed at its inception during the mid-twentieth century. If Old Salem Museums and Gardens made a concerted effort to make female history a priority, visitors would leave with a more accurate idea of Salem as a whole.

The final important issue regarding female involvement at Old Salem Museums and Gardens is the origin of the information given to the interpreters. As previously mentioned, the interpreters at the museum are very knowledgeable, and if asked, are able to discuss the role that women played in Salem's history. "Behind the Public Presentations: Research and Scholarship at Living History Museums of Early America,"

by John D. Krugler, explains that in the early 1990's, "at Historic Old Salem, which does not have a separate research department, interpreters do much of their own research...it is 'very important for each interpreter to be like a research assistant.'"¹⁰ This situation has evolved during the twentieth and twenty-first-centuries, and current interpreters explain that they are provided the bulk of the information included in their demonstrations during training. The museum still encourages them, however, to conduct their own research to supplement the information provided.¹¹ Therefore, it is likely that the interpreters are aware of female involvement in Salem, but are not given much opportunity to utilize this information. While female choirs are mentioned during the choir demonstration, because it takes place in the Single Brothers' House, which is the site of several male trade demonstrations, a large portion of their speech must necessarily be devoted to men. If there were more opportunities to focus on female history, the interpreters on staff would be equal to the task.

There are several reasons why Old Salem Museums and Gardens does not fully represent the history of Salem's women. These include the influence of other institutions and outside society, as well as budgetary limitations. The largest reason, however, is an unconscious perpetuation of past policies. If the museum were able to break out of this cycle, Old Salem would be able to develop a more comprehensive interpretation of the town's history.

¹⁰ John D. Krugler, "Behind the Public Presentations: Research and Scholarship at Living History Museums of Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (Jul. 1991): 359, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2938141>.

¹¹ Interview with interpreters at the Single Brothers' House, August 1, 2012.

Conclusion

Throughout the history of the denomination, Moravians consistently gave women power over their own lives. As a result, women were heavily involved in the founding and growth of the town of Salem, North Carolina, and were major economic contributors during its most productive period. The schools they founded, Salem Academy and College, have played a significant role in the Winston-Salem area since they were established. Considering all of this information, it would seem to be imperative that the museum that represents Salem's history, Old Salem Museums and Gardens, include an appropriate number of exhibits and demonstrations on the subject of women. Therefore, it is puzzling that the majority of its presentations display a patriarchal or gender neutral perspective. This situation is mostly due to the nature of Old Salem Museums and Gardens' early relationship with Colonial Williamsburg. As a museum that existed in a patriarchal society, it was easy for the administration to overlook the elements of Colonial Williamsburg's interpretation that were not appropriate for their own museum. Since then, the interpretations at Old Salem have included an unconscious perpetuation of these early misinterpretations. The museum would benefit greatly from more demonstrations that involve female trades, as well as a more involved relationship with the museum that has been set up in the Single Sisters' House by Salem College.

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